

Susan B. Anthony Project
100 North Main Street
Torrington, CT 06801

24 Hour Crisis Line
860-482-7133
Fax: 860-482-7133
Email: info@susanbathonyproject.org
Web: www.susanbathonyproject.org

24 Hour Crisis Line
860-482-7133

Board of Directors
Cynthia Kelley, President
Jacqueline Miller, Vice President
Gene Daponte, Treasurer
Bob Beron, Secretary
Gregory Bachmann
Ann Bott
Patricia Cupp
Barbara Douglass
Nanette Halberberg
Lisa Horne
Josephine Jones
Debra Kennes
Sharon Ober
Susan Payne
Tari Postad
Eric Salt
Marlene Smith
Peggy Tagliarino

Advisory Board
Claudette Bevil
Regina Barreca
Allan Borghesi
Manny Clark
Louis Donnell Jr.
Elizabeth Kelly Donovan
Polly Doremus
Hon. Anne C. Dranginis
Saun Ellis
James F. F. F.
Jessica Fozz
Elizabeth G. G.
Ann Gorham
Joke Horne
Susan Jordan
Beth McCabe
Congressman
Christopher Murphy
Catherine O'Leary
Barbara P. P.
Cynthia Quinn
Diana S. S.
Mary Schulte
Chris Smith
Ellen T. T.

Executive Director
Barbara Spiegel

Established 1987
Susan B. Anthony Project
Domestic Violence Shelter
100 North Main Street
Torrington, CT 06801
860-482-7133
Fax: 860-482-7133
Email: info@susanbathonyproject.org
Web: www.susanbathonyproject.org

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Barbara Spiegel, Executive Director
Susan B. Anthony Project, Torrington

Date: February 18, 2009

Re: ACC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30,
2011, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Barbara Spiegel, and I am the Executive Director of Susan B. Anthony Project in Torrington. Susan B. Anthony Project is one of the 18 community-based domestic violence shelter programs in Connecticut. Thank you for accepting my testimony regarding Bill 6365: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2011, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

I was relieved to learn that Governor Rell's proposed budget did not cut funding to domestic violence shelters. I urge you to support that budget and thank you in advance for your support of domestic violence crisis and support services.

I know you have heard from CCADV and its members over the last several years asking for increased funding to support 24 hour staffing in our shelters. I am hopeful that with federal stimulus funds coming to Connecticut that you will remember that need and find a way to include increased funding for domestic violence shelter programs.

Sadly, Susan B. Anthony Project has had two significant critical events in our shelter in the last year and a half. Both occurred when **there were no staff on site**. Fortunately, both times, concerned, responsible residents came to the rescue of another resident who was attempting suicide. The first incident took place on Christmas Eve 2007. Our twelve bed shelter was full, and our staff left for the evening. One staff person was on call with our answering service answering the crisis line and paging the counselor as needed. An alert resident noticed another resident who was acting incoherent and was spending a lot of time sleeping. This concerned resident called the crisis line and then spoke to the staff person. The staff person asked to speak to the incoherent resident who told the counselor that she intentionally took an overdose of her prescription medication. The Susan B. Anthony Project staff member called 911 and came immediately to the shelter where she met the ambulance and the overdosing woman who was unconscious. In this incident, a shelter resident, in crisis herself, came to the rescue of another woman. She came to the Susan B. Anthony Project shelter so she could be supported, counseled and heal and recover from the abuse she was escaping. Instead, she found herself in a position to save someone else's life.

Sadly, in the fall of 2008, the Susan B. Anthony Project shelter was the scene of another suicide attempt. Again, it came in the evening when **there were no staff present**. A shelter resident who was known to be depressed appeared to be stable when the staff all left for the evening. When another resident became concerned that a fellow resident was in her room and hadn't been seen for a long time, she knocked on the door and there was no response. She then opened the door and found the woman in a pool of blood from having cut her wrists. This concerned shelter resident called 911 and called the crisis line. What followed was similar to the previous incident. The emergency room staff stabilized the woman, and the Susan B. Anthony Project staff came to lend support to the suicidal woman and the other residents—women and children.

After both these incidents, both residents and staff were traumatized. Staff members felt terrible that they were not there to counsel and support these residents who were in despair. The residents didn't have someone there to listen, to encourage them, to

help them and work to prevent them from taking steps to end their lives. Staff members felt responsible for the tremendous burden that was placed on other residents.

I believe it's wrong for us to operate emergency shelters, as a safe haven for women and children who flee violence and abuse and are looking for support, **and then not fully staff them.** Our staff leave, and the women and children are alone in the middle of the night when they have nightmares; or when they lie awake afraid they will be found; or when they lie awake wondering how they will ever be able to support themselves and their children; or when they lie awake, alone, wondering if they will ever not be depressed and have enough confidence to apply for a job, speak to their child's teacher, or talk to a counselor about all their fears.

When I talk about Susan B. Anthony Project in my community, people are shocked to learn that the shelter where women and children seek relief from physical and emotional violence is not fully staffed 24 hours per day.

The current funding that Susan B. Anthony Project receives from DSS to support our shelter does not cover our actual operating costs. Even with our very successful fundraising program, we haven't been able to raise enough private funds to afford 24 hour staffing for our shelter. We need your help.

Thank you very much for your attention and your support.